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City Document—No. 24.

ANNUAL REPORT

OF THE

CITY MARSHAL,

FOR 1855.



ROXBURY:
NORFOLK COUNTY JOURNAL PRESS.
1855.

CITY OF ROXBURY.

IN BOARD OF ALDERMEN, Dec. 31, 1855.

ORDERED, That one thousand copies of the Report of the City Marshal be printed for the use of the Citizens.

JOSEPH W. TUCKER, *City Clerk.*

R E P O R T.



To the Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Roxbury :

GENTLEMEN,—As the year is now fast drawing to a close, I submit to your Hon. Board a somewhat general report of the Police Department for the time during which I have held the office of City Marshal.

The whole amount of money received by me for the city of Roxbury, on account of Fees of Police Officers and for Fines, up to this date, is as follows, viz. :

For fees of Police Officers, ...	\$942.72
“ fines for violation of City Ordinances, ...	43.01
“ “ “ Bird Law, ...	12.00
Total, ...	<u>\$997.73</u>

The whole amount of money paid out by me on account of Police Department, for conveyance of persons to prison, assistance in securing and arresting prisoners, &c., up to this date, is :	\$119.32
Which deducted from the whole sum received by me, leaves a balance in favor of the City of	878.41
	<u>\$997.73.</u>

Which balance I have paid over to Joseph W. Dudley, City Treasurer, as follows, viz :

June 11th, ...	\$132.36
Sept. 5th, ...	150.00
Nov. 1st, ...	200.00
“ 19th, ...	230.00
Dec. 31st, ...	166.05
	<u>\$878.41</u>

It is made a part of my duty as Marshal to collect and pay over to the City Treasurer all moneys accruing in the shape of fines for violations of City Ordinances, which I have done, as well as all fines arising from complaints made by me for violation of the Bird Law, as by the provisions of the law itself all fines arising therefrom shall go to the prosecutor thereof.

The fines received by me are not reckoned in the amount of Police fees.

The balance of Police fees paid to me up to this date, after deducting the amount paid out by me, is	\$823.40
The amount of Police fees now due the City, up to this date, not yet paid over to me, as far as I can now ascertain, is	292.15
Which added to the balance of Police fees, will make the sum total for fees, since the third of last April, of	\$1,115.55

The whole number of arrests since the first of April last, is 506; and for the following offences, viz.:

Drunkenness, 214. Assault, 76. Disturbing the Peace, 36. Larceny, 37. Stealing Fruit, 19. Violation of City Ordinances, 20. Violation of Liquor Law, 18. Violation of Bird Law, 13. Vagrancy, 12. Burglary, 9. Trespass, 6. Breaking Street Lamps, 5. Suspicious persons, 5. Lewdness, 3. Playing cards, 3. Begging, 3. Carrying loaded Pistol, 2. Pitching coppers on Sunday, 2. Malicious mischief, 2. Setting fire, 2. Firing crackers, 2. Stubborn children, 2. Attempting to pass bad money, 2. Violation of Sunday Law, 2. Violation of Billiard Law, 1. Stealing a ride, 1. Playing at ball on Sunday, 1. Crazy, 1. Fast driving, 1. Embezzling money, 1. Obtaining Goods by false pretences, 1. Bastard warrant, 1. Indecent exposure, 1. Raising a false alarm of Fire, 1. Obtaining Board by false pretences, 1.

As far as I have been able to ascertain, out of the whole number of arrests but 59 were born in this country; and

of these a large proportion were the children of foreigners ; and out of the remaining, but 18 were born in Roxbury.

It will readily be seen where most of the business of the Police Department is derived from.

Intemperance and the foreign population furnish nearly all of it.

There is growing up in the community a class of Boys and Girls, the children of foreign parents chiefly. They do not attend school, and have no regular or useful occupation, but are being trained in vice and crime ; and from this class nearly all the cases of Burglary and Larceny are derived.

Intemperance will always be a fruitful source of crime, wherever it exists ; and the City of Roxbury is not exempt from its curse, or its sources.

The liquor traffic has not yet ceased in Roxbury, though it may seem an easy matter to some to put a stop to it ; but such should recollect that it is one thing to say a person sells liquor contrary to law, and quite another to produce the legal evidence of the fact before a Court of Justice.

The liquor drank now-a-days has such a curious effect upon the minds of some of those persons who drink it, that when they are called upon to testify, their memories of certain facts seem to be all gone, or so wonderfully oblivious that they cannot tell whether they have drank milk or Gin, Spirits of Turpentine or Brandy.

Nearly all the persons arrested for drunkenness, when questioned, say that they procured their liquor in Boston, or had it given them by friends ; so not much can be made out of disclosures ; and, at any rate, the evidence of drunkards is not much to be relied upon in procuring convictions.

I have had to rely principally upon the efforts of the Police in procuring evidence ; and they say that liquor is sold in so sly a manner, and in such dark corners, they cannot get hold of any legal evidence themselves.

I determined that if the rum-shops could not be shut up, some of their customers should be.

Accordingly, the Police have had special instructions to arrest every person found by them drunk in the Streets or public places, and commit such to the Lock-up, there to remain until sober, and then tried for drunkenness.

What effect such a course has had, I will not pretend to say. I will only state the fact, that, for the nine months last year ending the last day of December, the whole number of arrests for drunkenness was 291; while for the same time this year the number is 214; being 77 less this year for the same time than last: from which the citizens must draw their own conclusions.

It has been made a part of the duty of the Police to act as "Truant Officers."

Accordingly, all truants and absentees from school have been looked after as well as circumstances would admit—all cases being attended to as soon as possible after receiving notice from the several teachers in whose schools such cases existed. I believe the Police have endeavored to do their duty in this respect; and I leave it for the teachers themselves to say how far they think truancy has been prevented by their efforts.

Fruit Pilferers have not been so plenty in Roxbury this season as last.

Although the Sunday Police were doubled in numbers this year, and went on duty earlier in the season, yet more persons were arrested last year for stealing Fruit than on this; a fact going to show the good effects of having a Sunday Police to look after the outskirts of the City.

It may well be supposed that the knowledge of the vigilance and activity, as well as increased numbers of the Sunday Police, caused many of these fruit pilferers to shun the City of Roxbury, as a place where many favors would not be shown them, if caught in the act of stealing Fruit from any Garden or Orchard.

The new "Bird Law," I believe, has been pretty effectually enforced in this City during the past season.

The excitement of last Spring, in consequence of quite a number of Burglaries being committed within a short space of time, has subsided; and the stupid fellow who committed quite a number of them, was caught by means of his own stupidity, and is now safe in prison.

Some few other Burglars have been caught, by the efforts of the Police, and are not now at large.

Also, several cases of Larceny have been detected, and the perpetrators properly disposed of; as well as some minor offences against the City Ordinances, &c.

At the present time the City of Roxbury is believed to be in a quiet and peaceable state.

The Police Court of Roxbury has been in operation since the tenth of May last, and in my humble opinion has met, and will continue to meet, the expectations of that portion of the citizens who wish to see an uniform administration of justice, where trials can be conducted in a proper manner, fairly and impartially, the Court held at regular hours, and the Justice who presides receiving a fixed compensation, in nowise dependant upon the number of cases brought before him.

As far as my observation has been able to extend, the Police Court of Roxbury, thus far, has been a successful experiment.

The idle and the dissolute do not congregate around the Court Room, for they receive no encouragement and find no sympathy there.

The "baneful influences of a Police Court," heretofore predicted, have not as yet been fastened upon us.

The Police Department is an important affair in any City or Town where its organization is called for.

The duties of a Policeman are arduous, and oftentimes

very unpleasant; he has to deal with all sorts of persons, and there are those who are always ready to find fault with and to censure him, either for doing or not doing, just as the case may seem to suit the purposes of these fault-finders.

A Police Officer should be a man of strict integrity, one who will do his duty in a fearless, independent and humane manner, one who on all occasions will scorn a bribe, whether offered in the shape of money, monied influence, or the popular favor. He should go about his duty in a quiet way, laboring as well to prevent the commission of offences, as to catch the offender after he has committed the offence.

He should be willing at all times to impart information where it is his duty so to do, and never attempting to make the execution of a law or an order odious or difficult in any way or manner. He does not always wait to be told what to do, but is ever active, and always laboring for the welfare of the community as his primary object. In short, he should be a man of moral, as well as physical courage, active, intelligent and humane.

Low cunning, roguish shrewdness, or a previous acquaintance and fellowship with rogues themselves, are not necessary qualifications for a Policeman.

There is no good reason why the office of a Policeman should not be considered as honorable a position as that of any Public Officer whatever.

The right kind of men should be selected, and they should be made to feel that the community appreciate their services and are willing to pay them liberally for them.

And also they should be surrounded with good influences, and act under an honorable Police system; and this leads me to say a few words about the Fee system, which was abolished in April last.

I am well convinced that the old fee system was calculated to corrupt and deprave those who acted under it.

It held out inducements to make such arrests as should promise the greatest amount of fees, with the least trouble to the officer, and also to let those offenders go unpunished in whose cases the fees did not promise to pay.

Its tendency was to lower the officer in his own estimation, and also that of the public, by having it constantly thrown in his face, when he made an arrest, that his prospective fee was the paramount object; and I am somewhat of the opinion that such a charge has not been altogether without some foundation, from the recent declarations and conduct of individuals, not now members of the Police department.

While the honorable and high-minded officer would scorn to make an arrest for any other object than that of the faithful performance of his duty, yet his feelings and reputation are made to suffer, while he is to derive a part of his compensation for his services from the fees accruing from the arrests he makes.

And here let me say that, as far as I can observe, nothing could be more repugnant to the feelings of the high-minded men who belong to the present Police department, than the restoration of the old fee system.

It gives me great pleasure to say, that I believe that there are belonging to the present Police department of Roxbury, as faithful and efficient officers, and as high-minded and honorable men, as can be found in any city or town where a Police force exists, notwithstanding the efforts of the short-sighted, the disaffected and the malicious to bring discredit upon the Police department.

And it will also give me pleasure, on all proper occasions, to commend each one individually, in such terms as his faithfulness and efficiency in the performance of his duty, and the prompt and willing manner in which he has aided and assisted me to perform mine, and make my task as easy as possible, shall justly merit.

In the performance of my duty as City Marshal, I have

not confined my attention to any particular locality; but have endeavored to look after all parts of the City, and to act impartially, courting no favors and fearing no frowns.

Having in view the enforcement of the laws, in such a manner as should best promote their true object in securing the welfare of the community, willing at all times to carry out your directions, and feeling that when I could not conscientiously do so, the only honorable course for me would be to resign my office at once.

Gentlemen, my official connection with you is now drawing to a close; and permit me to thank you for the confidence which you have reposed in me by placing me in the office which I now hold, an appointment which you can each one bear witness was not made in accordance with any promise from you, either collectively or individually.

How far I have merited your confidence, it is not for me to say. I can only say that, with the aid derived from my Assistants, I have endeavored to perform my duty in a conscientious manner, according to the best of my ability;—and I beg of you that, whatever errors you may think I have committed, you will attribute to the head, and not to the heart.

Very Respectfully,

BENJ. MERIAM, *City Marshal.*

Roxbury, Dec. 31st, 1855.



